

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-20

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R 141950Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3994

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, JM

SUBJ: LIGHTBOURNE'S NEW PARTY

REF: A-170 OCT 16, 1973

1. SUMMARY: LIGHBOURNE ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF A THIRD PARTY, CITING POPULAR DISILLUSIONMENT WITH BOTH THE JLP AND THE PNP. THE PRESS ACKNOWLEDGED HIS BRAVERY, BUT QUESTIONS HIS CHANCES OF SUCCESS. LIGHBOURNE IS FACING STIFF ODDS AND HIS MOVEMENT IS LIKELY TO GO THE WAY OF OTHERS IN THE PAST. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEB 8, ROBERT LIGHTBOURNE, THE MP FOR WESTERN ST. THOMAS AND MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN THE LAST JLP GOVT, ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO FORM A THIRD POLITICAL PARTY IN JAMAICA. LIGHBOURNE'S ANNOUNCEMENT FOLLOWED A CLEAN SEEP BY HIS SUPPORTERS IN THE FEB 5 PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS (HIS INDEPENDENTS WON ALL SIX SEATS IN HIS CONSTITUENCY) AND ENDED MANY WEEKS OF SPECULATION AS TO WHAT HE WOULD DO NEXT.

3. IN MAKING HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, LIGHTBOURNE SAID, THAT FOR SOME TIME NOW HIS COLLEAGUES AND HE HAVE RECOGNIZED A GROWING AND URGENT

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NEED TO BRING TO JAMAICA SOMETHING POLITICALLY NEW. THEY HAD SEEN THE NEED OF A PARTY CAPABLE OF COPING WITH THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

NEEDS OF THE RAPIDLY CHANGING AND COMPLEX WORLD WHICH JAMAICA CURRENTLY FACES AND THE NEED FOR A PARTY WITH THE BLEND OF EXPERIENCE, INNOVATIVE POWERS AND COMPASSION WHICH A YOUNG AND POOR NATION SUCH AS JAMAICA REQUIRES.

4. ACCORDING TO LIGHTBOURNE, THE CURRENT SITUATION CANNOT BE REGARDED EITHER AS ACCEPTABLE OR AUGURING WELL FOR THE FUTURE AND THE DISILLUSIONMENT, DISAPPOINTMENT AND DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE PRESENT GOVT IS ONLY OUTMATCHED BY THE NON-ACCEPTANCE OF THE AVAILABLE OPPOSITION AS AN ALTERNATIVE GOVT. LIGHTBOURNE CRITICIZED PM MANLEY'S USE OF THE WORD "LOVE" AS SHEER HYPOCRISY IN THE FACE OF THE VIOLENCE WHICH MANY POLITICIANS REGARD AS A PART OF THEIR POLITICAL LIFE. HE SAID THAT THE DETAILS OF HIS PARTY'S PROGRAM, PHILOSOPHY AND COMPOSITION WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT APPROPRIATE INTERVALS.

5. THE DAILY GLEANER, WHILE RESERVING THE RIGHT TO COMMENT FURTHER AFTER THE COMPOSITION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE NEW PARTY ARE DISCLOSED, CATALOGUED THE MANY DISASTROUS ATTEMPTS AT THIRD PARTY FORMATION IN THE PAST AND SUGGESTED THAT LIGHTBOURNE, IN ORDER TO TEST THE WATERS, SHOULD CHALLENGE BOTH THE JLP AND THE PNP TO A BY-ELECTION IN HIS OWN CONSTITUENCY.

6. THE PRO-PNP DAILY NEWS TOOK ISSUE WITH LIGHTBOURNE'S STATEMENT THAT THE POPULACE WAS DISILLUSIONED WITH THE GOVT PARTY BY POINTING TO THE PNP'S SHOWING IN THE 1972 AND 1974 ELECTIONS. THE DAILY NEWS ARGUES THAT LIGHTBOURNE HAS ONLY PROVEN HIS STRENGTH AND APPEAL IN HIS OWN CONSTITUENCY; IN ORDER TO MOUNT A NATION-WIDE EFFORT, HE WILL NEED A VASTLY LARGER ORGANIZATION THAN HE NOW POSSESS. IT ALSO PONDERES WHETHER AT AGE 67 LIGHTBOURNE WOULD HAVE THE ENERGY NECESSARY TO MOUNT A MAJOR DRIVE AT THE 1977 GENERAL ELECTION. THE COMMENTARY CONCLUDES HOWEVER THAT THE NATION SHOULD ADMIRE LIGHTBOURNE FOR HIS COURAGE IN TAKING ON SUCH A DIFFICULT TASK.

7. COMMENT: WHILE LIGHTBOURNE IS A CAPABLE AND RESPECTED POLITICIAN, HIS AGE AND LACK OF A BROAD FOLLOWING SEVERELY CIRCUMSCRIBE THE PROBABILITIES OF HIS ACHIEVING ANY KIND OF SUCCESS IN FUTURE ELECTIONS. HE SPECIFICALLY LACKS THAT ONE INGREDIENT THAT HAS BEEN SO ESSENTIAL FOR PARTY LEADERS IN MODERN JAMAICAN HISTORY--THE SUPPORT OF A MAJOR LABOR ORGANIZATION. MOST OBSERVERS IN KINGSTON
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HAVE ALREADY WRITTEN-OFF LIGHTBOURNE'S CHANCES OF OBTAINING THE KIND OF SUPPORT NECESSARY TO OBTAIN HIS ANNOUNCED GOALS OR TO INFRINGE SERIOUSLY ON THE VOTE OF EITHER OF THE MAJOR PARTIES. IT IS STILL UNKNOWN WHETHER ANY OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WILL JOIN MR. LIGHTBOURNE, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THERE WILL BE SUFFICIENT NUMBERS TO PROVIDE THE KIND OF ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT HE WILL NEED TO CONSTRUCT A VIABLE ORGANIZATION. HEWITT

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